

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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SUBJECT: NIEM Program Support of UCore for Information Sharing

The purpose of this statement is to clarify the position of the NIEM Program regarding the use of Universal Core (UCore) in information exchanges with partners in the defense and intelligence communities. This memo is intended to augment, not supersede, existing guidance on the use of NIEM and the Logical Entity eXchange Specifications (LEXS).

The National Information Exchange Model program (www.niem.gov) was launched on February 28, 2005, as a partnership between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The NIEM framework provides standard vocabulary, guidance, and processes that help promote effective and efficient information sharing capabilities across organizational boundaries. An Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) is the set of specifications that describe the function and structure of a NIEM information exchange.

To support the implementation of interoperable NIEM-conformant information exchanges, DOJ developed the Logical Entity eXchange Specifications (LEXS)¹. LEXS is a family of reusable NIEM IEPDs for many common types of public safety information exchanges, particularly for the publication, update, and federated searching of law enforcement and intelligence data². LEXS is also used within the law enforcement community of DHS. Currently, the Enterprise Architectures of both DOJ and DHS include the use of NIEM and LEXS in the implementation of information exchanges. In particular, the IEPDs for the National Data Exchange (N-DEX) and Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) are based on LEXS.

On April 17, 2008, a memo titled *Department of Defense (DoD) and Intelligence Community (IC) Initial Release of Universal Core (UCore)* was distributed, cosigned by their respective CIOs. UCore is a standard approach to representing a few elements of information common to many exchanges in the DoD and IC, specifically the concepts of “where” and “when.” Version 2.0 of UCore, currently in pilot testing, was jointly developed by the DoD, IC, DOJ, and DHS, and also includes support for simple concepts of “who” and “what.”

The involvement of the NIEM program in the requirements, design, and implementation of UCore 2.0 ensured its compatibility with NIEM and LEXS. UCore 2.0 shares the same underlying message structure as LEXS, which creates a substantial functional alignment between the two and allows for greatly simplified translation of messages from one to the other. In addition, UCore 2.0 is largely agnostic with respect to the information exchange vocabularies of various communities. This means that UCore 2.0 messages can supplement the basic UCore “digest” with richer, more detailed information content in the form of NIEM “payloads,” governed by NIEM IEPDs.

¹ LEXS originally stood for LEISP Exchange Specifications.

² Additional information on LEXS can be found at http://it.ojp.gov/jsr/common/viewDetail.jsp?sub_id=256.

Although UCore is not mandated by DoD or IC, its use is nonetheless expected to grow among programs in those communities. Existing NIEM users, including DOJ and DHS, may in the near future encounter partners who wish to exchange information via UCore. Current NIEM users who have implemented NIEM and LEXS will find that producing or consuming UCore messages will take little additional effort.

Additionally, when NIEM users work with DoD and IC counterparts to collaboratively create a new information exchange, the most appropriate standards should be chosen based on the requirements of the exchange and its various participants. Already, some DoD and IC systems have implemented NIEM and LEXS for sharing law enforcement and intelligence information. Similarly, some DOJ and DHS systems will find it valuable to participate in UCore-based exchanges, either natively or via translation. Moreover, many UCore-based exchanges may choose to use NIEM as the most appropriate vocabulary for the detailed payloads that accompany each message.

Regardless, the dynamic among these standards should not be viewed as an either/or choice. Because UCore has been designed to be interoperable with NIEM and LEXS, current NIEM-based systems will not need to deviate from existing implementations to share information via UCore. The NIEM Program is fully committed to ensuring that future versions of NIEM and LEXS will be similarly compatible with UCore. Additionally, both DOJ and DHS, through their Enterprise Architecture programs, will ensure that use of UCore 2.0 is permitted based on the requirements of the exchange and its various participants.